

POLICE/SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT		GENERAL ORDERS	
SUBJECT: Traffic Control		NUMBER: 2-21	
EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 1999		REVIEW DATE:	
AMENDS/SUPERSEDES: GO 2-21, January 1988		APPROVED: _____ Chief of Police/Sheriff	
CALEA STANDARDS: 61.3		VLEPSC STANDARDS: OPR.05.01-.02, OPR.07.11	

NOTE

This order is for internal use only, and does not enlarge an officer's civil or criminal liability in any way. It should not be construed as the creation of a higher standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third-party claims. Violations of this directive, if proven, can only form the basis of a complaint by this department, and then only in a non-judicial administrative setting.

INDEX WORDS

Accidents, traffic
Traffic control

I. POLICY

The department performs traffic functions such as point traffic control, parking control, school crossing guard supervision, emergency assistance, and identifies and reports hazards, checks abandoned vehicles, recovers stolen vehicles, and provides traffic safety information and recommendations. The public relies on law enforcement for assistance and advice when faced with the many routine and emergency traffic situations which can and do develop in an urban society. Often there is no other private or public agency available to provide such services. Further, traffic control usually does not involve arrests or criminal investigations, yet it is a service necessary to the safe regulation of pedestrians and vehicles. A highly visible activity, traffic control must be performed consistently, responsibly, courteously, and professionally. The department expects officers to be mindful of the expectations of the community and perform accordingly.

II. PURPOSE

The purpose of this order is to establish uniform procedures for the provision of traffic direction and control, traffic engineering, and ancillary traffic services.

III. PROCEDURES

A. Traffic control equipment

1. Officers shall have immediately available personal equipment for directing traffic to include the following:
 - a. Uniform: Except in an emergency, officers shall be in uniform when directing traffic. Off-duty and plain-clothes personnel shall conspicuously display their badge when directing traffic.
 - b. Reflective vest: Officers directing traffic shall wear a reflective vest at all times.
 - c. Whistle: Officers shall use a whistle when directing traffic unless circumstances preclude its effective use.
 - d. Flashlight: Officers shall attach the illumination cone to the flashlight when directing traffic during hours of darkness and any other circumstance of limited visibility.
2. Each patrol vehicle shall include the following equipment:
 - a. Flares: Officers shall use flares during hours of darkness or inclement weather. Officers may use them at any other appropriate time. During hours of daylight, cones may be more visible than flares.
 - b. Cones: Officers shall use cones during daylight hours, particularly at the scene of a fire or explosion.
3. The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) has temporary barricades, cones, lighted and non-lighted signs, and truck-mounted directional signs. The on-duty supervisor shall request VDOT assistance if circumstances warrant.

B. Methods of manual direction of traffic

1. *Virginia Code* § 46.2-1309 outlines uniform hand and whistle signals as follows:
 - a. To stop traffic by hand, the officer shall stand with shoulders parallel to moving traffic. Raise the arm(s) up 45 degrees above the shoulder with hand(s) extended, palm(s) toward the moving traffic to be stopped.
 - b. To move traffic by hand, the officer shall stand with the shoulders parallel to the traffic to be moved. Extend the right arm and hand full

length at the height of the shoulders, towards such traffic, fingers extended and joined, palm down. Bring the hand sharply in the direction the traffic is to move. Repeat the movement with the left arm and hand to start traffic from the opposite direction.

2. If the officer uses the whistle (per § 46.2-1309), the following commands shall be observed:
 - a. To stop traffic, sound one long blast.
 - b. To start traffic, sound two short blasts.
 - c. To stop traffic for an emergency, sound three or more short blasts. This signal orders traffic to clear the intersection and stop.
 - d. Give several short blasts to get the attention of a driver or pedestrian who does not respond to a given signal.
3. Avoid using the voice in directing traffic. Arm gestures and the whistle are usually sufficient. Oral orders are not easy to give or understand and often lead to misinterpretations which are dangerous. An order which is shouted can antagonize the motorist.
4. Use of flashlight with illuminated cone or baton:

Although a flashlight alone may be used to halt traffic, officers shall use the safer and more effective cone attachment. To stop traffic, slowly swing the beam of the light across the path of oncoming traffic. The beam from the flashlight strikes the pavement as an elongated spot of light. After the driver has stopped, arm signals may be given in the usual manner, the vehicle's headlight providing illumination.

C. Manual operation of traffic control devices

On occasion, officers must manually operate traffic control signal lights, either to attempt to recycle a signal light or to place the signal lights on flash or blink. Officers shall manually control traffic control devices only under the following circumstances:

1. When traffic lights malfunction.
2. To facilitate movement at traffic accidents or other emergencies.
3. To provide a thoroughfare for a motorcade or funeral procession.

4. To alleviate congestion resulting from the use of automatic controls particularly during planned, special events.

D. Special event traffic control

For any other special event, the chief of police/sheriff shall ensure the preparation/implementation of a special traffic plan which addresses ingress and egress of vehicles and pedestrians, provisions for parking, spectator control, public transportation, assignment of point control duties and reliefs, alternate traffic routing, temporary traffic controls and parking prohibitions, emergency vehicle access, and appropriate media coverage.

E. Traffic control at accident scenes

Officers shall employ techniques of traffic control at accident scenes with the following objectives in mind:

1. Protect lives and property.
2. Prevent additional accidents.
3. Protect evidence.
4. Keep avenues of ingress and egress open for emergency vehicles.
5. Restore the safe flow of traffic as soon as practicable.

F. Traffic control at fire scenes

1. Upon arrival at a fire scene, officers shall contact the on-scene fire officials to determine if any special traffic-control procedures must be observed.
2. The objective of traffic control is to allow fire and rescue equipment to be deployed without hindrance and to keep pedestrian and vehicular traffic away from the scene.
3. Restore the safe flow of traffic as soon as practicable.
4. Officers responding to the scene of a fire call shall observe the following rules, mindful that the senior fire official is in charge:
 - a. No vehicles, including those of volunteer firemen, shall be allowed to drive into the block where fire apparatus is parked and operating.
 - b. No vehicles shall be allowed to cross fire hoses without the approval of the senior fire official.

- c. In cases of fires at a hospital or prison, no vehicles, including those of volunteer firemen, shall be allowed on the grounds.
- d. The exception to the rules above shall be life-saving vehicles on actual calls for services.
- e. Parked vehicles which interfere with fire operations may be towed as needed.

G. Traffic control during adverse road and weather conditions

- 1. The chief of police/sheriff shall notify the local radio stations, public works, and the fire department of adverse road conditions that affect the motoring public.
- 2. The chief of police/sheriff may close a street if, in his or her opinion, the surface conditions and terrain are unusually hazardous. He shall request public works assistance in alleviating the problem and request public service radio announcements be made concerning the closure.
- 3. The chief of police/sheriff shall request dispatchers to notify the proper utility company and assign officers to direct traffic and safeguard movement at the scene of all downed power lines, broken gas or water mains, or at construction sites, when the situation endangers the safe movement of traffic.
- 4. Adverse road conditions may require several officers and the use of flares, traffic cones, or temporary barriers to reroute traffic. The on-duty supervisor shall contact VDOT for assistance, signs, and barricade equipment, if needed.
- 5. Adverse weather conditions may require the assistance of other law-enforcement agencies. If additional personnel are needed, the on-duty supervisor shall ask the dispatcher to request help from *[list cooperating agencies]*.

H. Escorts: See GO 2-12, GO 2-19

I. Roadblocks: See GO 2-6, GO 2-9, GO 2-19

J. Ancillary traffic services

- 1. Stranded or disabled motorists
 - a. Officers shall provide reasonable assistance to motorists. Help may include requesting the dispatcher to call wreckers or obtaining other services as needed. Time and duty permitting, officers may assist

stranded and disabled motorists to obtain fuel and repairs, but officers shall not perform repairs personally.

- b. Unless extenuating circumstances exist, police vehicles shall not be used to jump start or push non-government-owned vehicles.
- c. Officers shall be aware of possible dangers to motorists who are stranded in isolated and hazardous locations on the highway, and shall take steps to reduce these threats by transporting motorists to safer locations or setting out flares to warn other motorists.
- d. If the officer must leave the scene before the arrival of requested assistance, he or she shall request that another officer check the area and provide assistance or protection.
- e. Officers shall be able to provide directions to various locations within the town and county.

2. Highway emergencies

Officers arriving at the scene of any highway emergency shall request the dispatcher to obtain necessary services and then provide emergency First Aid, fire suppression, and obtain additional assistance as the situation requires, pending arrival of appropriate emergency services.

3. Emergency escorts

- a. Officers shall not escort other emergency vehicles. Officers may direct traffic at intersections to expedite the movement of other emergency vehicles.
- b. Officers shall not provide emergency or non-emergency escorts for private vehicles. If a medical emergency exists, then an ambulance should be summoned.

4. Procedures for reporting road hazards and debris

- a. An officer locating hazardous debris in the roadway shall remove it or request the dispatcher to notify public works to have it removed from the road to a safe location.
- b. Officers shall report all highway defects to the dispatchers and, in turn, dispatchers shall contact the Department of Public Works as soon as the situation dictates.